announced the enactment of National Employment Guarantee Act to provide a legal guarantee for atleast 100 days of employment to begin with on asset-creating public works programmes every year at minimum wages for atleast one able bodied person in every poor household. The scheme will be implemented in all states of the country. In the interim, it is proposed to launch a new Food for Work programme in 150 districts classified as most backward and identified as areas in immediate need of such a programme.

Uniform wage pattern for beedi workers

2464. MS. PRAMILA BOHIDAR: Will the Minister of LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is a uniform wage pattern for beedi workers in the country;

(b) if so, what is the present scale of wages; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT (SHRI SIS RAM OLA): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) The minimum wage for scheduled employments including beedi rolling are fixed by the State Governments based on a number of factors like socio-economic and agro-climatic conditions, prices of essential commodities, paying capacity, local conditions etc., which vary from State to State and region to region. Therefore, there is a disparity in the minimum wages in the country.

Enumeration of beedi workers

2465. MS. PRAMILA BOHIDAR: Will the Minister of LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have taken any steps in regard to enumeration of beedi workers in various States;

(b) if so, the details in respect of the State of Orissa; and

(c) the details of the methodology adopted for such enumeration?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT (SHRI SIS RAM OLA): (a) to (c) Issuing of identity cards to the beedi workers is an ongoing

process. The Central Government have continuously been requesting the State Governments for launching special campaign to identify beedi workers and issue identity cards in their respective States. In addition, Regional Welfare Commissioners of the Labour Welfare Organisation are also issuing identity cards to beedi workers through its offices/dispensaries in the States. Presently there are about 1.86 lakh identified beedi workers in Orissa State.

Rate of interest on EPF

†2466. SHRI HARISH RAWAT: Will the Minister of LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have taken a decision to reduce the rate of interest on the Employees Provident Fund;

(b) if so, whether this decision has been taken after having the consensus with the Trustees and Trade Unions; and

(c) if not, the justification of the said decision?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT (SHRI SIS RAM OLA): (a) Central Board of Trustees, Employees Provident Fund in its 169th meeting held on 9.8.2004 recommended an interim rate of interest @ 8.5% to be credited to EPF members' accounts for the year 2004-05 after considering all relevant facts. The matter is under examination by the Government.

(b) and (c) As the consensus could not be built on the issue, the decision was taken by the Central Board of Trustees, Employees Provident Fund on the majority basis.

Child labourers

†2467. DR. NARAYAN SINGH MANAKLAO: Will the Minister of LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether any survey to find out the number of child labourers in the country has been conducted, if so, the details thereof, State-wise;

(b) out of child labourers so identified and listed, the percentage of child labourers being rehabilitated and the various ways in which this is being done;

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.